

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

071528Z Oct 05

UNCLAS BOGOTA 009565

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR PRM AND WHA/AND; GENEVA FOR CAMPBELL AND
BIRDSALL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: OMBUDSMAN AND UNHCR OPEN "HOUSE OF RIGHTS" IN
ALTOS DE CAZUCA

1. The national Ombudsman inaugurated a "casa de los derechos" (house of rights) in the Altos de Cazuca neighborhood of Soacha, with support from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on September 29. Based on a model used by the UN in El Salvador, the office establishes the first official national and local government presence in the impoverished neighborhood some 12 miles south of Bogota. Residents will have access to the local and national Ombudsman, national agencies for family welfare, training, assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs), local government planning and education agencies, and a medical clinic.

2. With an estimated population of 363,000, Soacha is one of the top places where new IDPs settle in the Bogota area. The Government has officially registered 18,000 IDPs in Soacha since 1995. Traditionally a neighborhood of guerrilla influence (the Government resettled many demobilized M-19 and EPL guerrillas in Soacha in the late 1980s and early 1990s), UNHCR and the local ombudsman report that criminal gangs and the militias of the so-called "Bloque Capital" paramilitary group have gained more control in the zone.

3. UNHCR Resident Representative Roberto Meier said criminal gangs control access to water and electricity in some parts of the neighborhood and supporters of guerrilla and paramilitary groups are reported to impose roadblocks, restrict parties after a certain time of night, murder, and forcibly recruit young people in the area. UNHCR reports that between 2001-2004, 437 people were murdered, 244 of whom were between the ages of 16-20.

4. Because of the vulnerability of the population, and the large concentration of IDPs, the UN opened an office in Altos de Cazuca in February 2005. Meier said at the time the intention was not to replace the Colombian state but to provide protection and draw attention to the problems in the area. The "casa de los derechos" in Altos de Cazuca is expected to provide needy residents with easier access to government ombudsman, health, and social welfare agencies. UNHCR hopes to open more "casa de los derechos" offices in collaboration with the GOC in other parts of the country.

WOOD